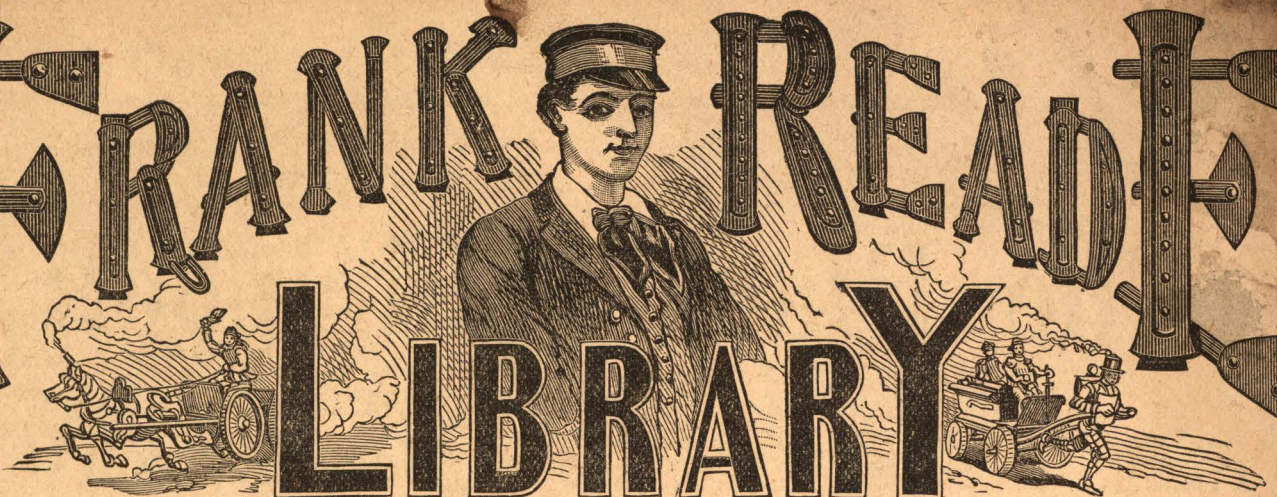


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The Black Whirlpool;

or, Frank Reade, Jr.'s Deep Sea Search for a Lost Ship.

By "NONAME."



They passed into the next cabin. This was the captain's. The desk yet stood as it had been left, with papers and other articles, though soaked, yet intact. It did not take Cliff long to find what he wanted. He found the valuable papers in a tin box in the safe, the combination of which he had been given. Then he rescued the vessel's log.

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The Black Whirlpool;

OR,

Frank Reade, Jr.'s Deep Sea Search for a Lost Ship.

A STRANGE SUBMARINE STORY.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "The Black Mogul," "Below the Sahara," "In White Latitudes," "The Lost Navigators," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT THE LOST SHIP.

SYLVESTER CLARE, of the famous London firm of Clare Bros., ship owners and foreign merchants, entered his office in Liverpool one day in a very agitated state of mind.

The Liverpool office was a branch of the London house, and from here operated a line of packet ships to India and China. The most valuable ship of this line was the Corsair, Captain Miles Swan, as good a sailor as ever trod a quarter deck.

And the Corsair was already two months overdue. It was the first time in the history of the Liverpool branch that a vessel had been so long missing.

So the gravest fears for her safety were entertained. Owners and underwriters had made every possible effort to get news of her.

One ship had just reached port, and her master brought the first tidings of the missing ship.

She had spoken the Corsair in the Indian Ocean, upon the line of the Tropic of Capricorn, and on the course usually pursued by China ships during the northeast monsoon.

Everything was well with the Corsair at that time; but a day later reports were heard of a terrific hurricane sweeping that part of the sea.

It was possible that the Corsair had fallen a victim to this, or might have been disabled or blown out of her course.

This was but a vague report, but yet it was something, and the anxious ones still hoped to hear of the Corsair appearing at any moment in the harbor.

But as Sylvester Clare on this day entered his office he saw in the outer room two men pacing up and down in great agitation.

Clare looked at the clerk, who said:

"Two gentlemen very anxious to see you, sir."

"Show them in at once!"

The clerk opened the outer door and beckoned to them. They came into the office quickly.

One was a tall, dark man, with the unmistakable stamp of the law upon him. The other was a shrewd, foxy-visaged fellow.

"Well, gentlemen," said Clare, brusquely. "What can I do for you?"

"I am James Moreton, sir, counsellor-at-law!" said the tall man. "Number Nine, Temple, London. This is a Scotland Yard man, Mr. Fingan. We represent the unfortunate James Menton Bliss, who is now in the Old Bailey on the charge of murder and whose trial comes off this week."

"Bliss!" exclaimed Mr. Clare. "Oh, I remember! he is charged with the murder of the old Earl of Manton!"

"And has been in jail for a year awaiting trial. But he is innocent, sir. As innocent as a lamb."

"I hope so," said Mr. Clare, mildly; "but what have I to do with it?"

"Very much, sir," replied the lawyer, nervously. "You see your

ship, the Corsair, is overdue. Now all our evidence to clear our client, which we sent a representative to Hong Kong to procure, is on board that ship! Unless it arrives safely the prosecution will surely convict poor Bliss, and he will die for a crime of which he is not guilty!"

Mr. Clare's eyes opened wide.

"My soul!" he exclaimed; "that is terrible! You must get a stay! They cannot hang an innocent man! That would be dreadful!"

"Ah, the case has been long delayed," said the lawyer, dubiously; "it must come to trial this month."

"You say the man with the necessary evidence is on board the Corsair?"

"Here is his letter, sent a week before sailing by steamer."

James Moreton handed the sheet of paper to Clare, who read:

"HONG KONG, June—, 18—.

"Dear Moreton: I shall be ready to sail from here in one week, and have engaged passage for next Friday aboard the ship Corsair, bound direct for Liverpool. I could get a steamer two days later, but the Corsair will beat her at that. I have all the necessary depositions to prove the innocence of Bliss, and have sealed them up in a water tight tin box which I carry next my body day and night. I hope to reach Liverpool safe and sound and in good season.

"Your colleague,

"ARTHUR DINGLEY."

Sylvester Clare was much excited upon reading this letter. There was another powerful reason for praying that the Corsair might yet safely make port.

"Indeed, Mr. Moreton, I am in a very much disturbed state of mind as regards the Corsair, yet we hope and pray to hear from her at any moment."

"Then there is no other way to get tidings or assurance than to wait?" asked Moreton.

"Absolutely none!"

The lawyer walked back and forth in an agitated manner.

"If the ship has gone down," he said, "Heaven pity unfortunate Bliss; the evidence would be beyond recall!"

"Unless it were known where the ship went down, gentlemen," said Fingan, the detective, quietly.

"We could only guess that," said Mr. Clare. "She was last spoken on the Tropic of Capricorn. She may have gone down in that hurricane a day later. A rough estimate could be made by this."

"Ah, but she may have sunk in a mile depth of water," said the lawyer, despondently, "and be far beyond the reach of divers. It would be like looking for a needle in a haystack, unless one, indeed, had a submarine boat."

Mr. Clare gave a great start.

"A submarine boat!" he exclaimed. "That reminds me. There is one in the harbor at this very moment!"

The lawyer wheeled quickly.

"A submarine boat?" he gasped.

"Yes."

"What—where—whose craft is she?"

"I had the honor of an introduction to the gentleman at Lloyds. He is an American, and his name is Frank Reade, Jr. His boat is the most wonderful craft in the world, and can sail under water for an indefinite length of time."

"Ah!" cried Moreton, excitedly; "it is to America that we always look for innovations. A submarine boat! Dear me! Can we not see this Mr. Reade at once and enlist him in our cause?"

"It is possible," said Mr. Clare, consulting his watch. "In two hours he is to dine with me at the Golden Lion. If you will be there at that hour I will secure you a meeting—"

"A thousand thanks, sir!" cried the lawyer. "Fingan, this is our only hope. If we succeed in procuring the services of Mr. Reade and his submarine boat, will—will—"

"Well, sir?" said the detective, in his astute manner.

"Will you accompany him on the quest for the lost ship—if she is lost? I would go, but my professional duties—"

"Why, of course I will do that," agreed Fingan; "that should be my part."

"Very good!" cried the lawyer, with delight. "Mr. Clare, we are deeply indebted to you. At the hour appointed we will be at the Golden Lion."

"Very good, sir!" said Mr. Clare, with a dignified bow. Then the lawyer and the detective departed and the ship-owner went to his work.

The Golden Lion was a chop house where gentlemen of Mr. Clare's stamp were wont to lunch and dine, and meet to discuss the maritime news of the day.

At the appointed hour Mr. Clare entered the place.

He saw a tall, fine-looking young man, in a natty, blue, yachting suit, sitting near one of the windows and gazing into the busy street.

Approaching him, he said:

"Mr. Reade, this is an honor and a pleasure!"

The famous young American inventor sprang to his feet. With a cheery smile he said:

"Ah, Mr. Clare, I am delighted. I preceded you here!"

"I was detained a few moments later than I expected. I regret keeping you waiting."

"It is nothing!"

They sat down in the window and chatted for a time. Then they went into the cafe and Mr. Clare ordered the dinner. While it was being served the ship-owner was revolving in his mind how he was to broach the subject of the sunken or lost evidence to Frank.

Finally he said:

"One of my finest ships, the Corsair, is six weeks overdue."

Frank looked up with a start.

"Indeed!" he exclaimed. "You must be much alarmed!"

"I am. In fact I fear much that I have seen the last of her. In fact that she has gone down in a hurricane in the Indian Ocean!"

"The Indian Ocean?" exclaimed Frank, "perhaps I can aid you then!"

"Eh?" gasped the ship owner.

"I am going to India from here!" said the submarine navigator.

"As I shall pass through the Indian Ocean, if you desire, I will look for the Corsair!"

"Why!" exclaimed Clare, "that—that is more than kind."

"I am glad to do you the favor!"

"It is a great favor, I assure you. The Corsair itself is a great loss, but of course the underwriters make us whole. But there is that aboard the Corsair, which—which is very valuable, and—"

"An unusually valuable cargo, eh?" said Frank, helping himself to sherry.

"Ye-es; and thereby hangs a story."

"A story?"

The ship owner cleared his throat.

"Let me tell it to you," he said, "then you will understand why I have placed so high a value upon your kind offer."

With this Clare detailed the whole story of Bliss' incarceration for a crime of which he was innocent. He told of the visit of Moreton and Fingan to his office, a few hours before.

The young inventor listened with the greatest of interest. He set his wine glass down and said:

"Why this is a matter of vital moment. Suppose the Corsair is at the bottom of the sea. The evidence is sunk beyond recall."

"Unless," said Clare impressively, "you are kind enough to assume an interest in this affair."

"I!" exclaimed the young inventor.

"Yes; for you are the only person on earth having the power to recover that evidence or solve the fate of the Corsair."

CHAPTER II.

THE SUBMARINE BOAT.

FOR some moments Frank Reade, Jr., and Clare faced each other without speaking. Each read the other's thoughts.

Finally Clare said:

"I have been led to believe that you could be induced to undertake this case, Mr. Reade, for humanity's sake alone, if nothing else. Mr. Moreton and Fingan, the detective, are to meet us here—ah, here they are now!"

Frank turned and met the lawyer and the detective.

In a few courteous words the introduction was made. Then the lawyer began his work diplomatically.

But Frank said brusquely:

"I have heard the whole story from Mr. Clare, sir."

"Eh, well," exclaimed the lawyer nervously, "you see, I—we recognize your ability to help us and—"

"Yes," said Frank bluntly, "I can help you, and I don't need any coaxing to do it either. I can see that a human life hangs upon the recovery of this evidence. Now I am on a trip to India with my submarine boat, and this affair offers me diversion. I will undertake to find the ship, if she is at the bottom of the sea, and the tin box on the body of Arthur Dingley, but cannot promise success. The sea is a mighty wilderness—"

"I know, I know!" cried Moreton, losing command of himself. "You are a philanthropist, Mr. Reade. Oh, you Americans are so abrupt, and—so right to the point, as it were—I always admired you as a people, and—individually as well. Only—for the love of God, find that evidence!"

Frank gripped the lawyer's hand.

"I will leave nothing undone!" he said.

The subject then underwent long and careful discussion.

When it was announced that Fingan had volunteered to accompany the party, Frank gave him a swift glance and said:

"How soon can you be ready, my man?"

"I am ready now, sir!"

"You are?"

"Yes, sir. A detective is always ready to be transported to any part of the earth at any moment."

Frank looked keenly at the fellow now, and continued:

"But your traps—"

"They are in a cab at the door, sir. I have come prepared!"

The young inventor looked surprised.

"How did you know that I would undertake this project?" he asked.

"I did not, sir," replied Fingan; "but I thought that there was a possibility that you would, and I was resolved to be prepared. A good detective always takes time by the forelock!"

"You will do!" laughed Frank. "Well, my boat is now at Wharf C. We will proceed there now and be rowed at once to the Venture, my submarine boat. As quick as I can raise anchor we will be off."

"We don't wish to hasten your departure, Mr. Reade," said Moreton, eagerly; "but of course time—"

"I know it all counts. You need have no fear. If I succeed in finding the Corsair, I will bring back the evidence. Until then, adieu!"

Frank Reade, Jr., the American, gripped hands with Moreton and with Clare. His was the characteristic Yankee spirit. He lost no time in at once getting to work.

"Come, my friend," he said to Fingan.

Together they entered the cab, and were driven to Wharf C. A boat lay alongside the pier, and it held a single occupant.

This was a comical little Irishman, who at once sprang up.

"Whisht, Misther Frank. Ye're not gone long. But it's glad I am to see yez back."

"It was a quick dinner, Barney," laughed the young inventor. "Is Pomp aboard the Venture?"

"He is, sor. Shure, we'd niver lave the vessel alone."

"I should hope not. Ah, Mr. O'Shea, make you acquainted with Mr. Fingan."

"Glad to know yez, sor," said Barney, with a sweeping bow.

"And the same to you," replied the detective, affably.

Then Barney rowed them away out among the harbor craft.

As they went on Frank told the Irishman of the contract he had undertaken.

Barney was delighted. The voyage to India would now be coupled with that which would furnish incident and adventure. All was just what Frank Reade, Jr.'s two faithful companions, Barney O'Shea, the Irishman, and Pomp, the negro, were fond of.

They had traveled in many lands with the young inventor and his famous inventions. They were trusted, tried and true.

After threading their way for some time among the harbor craft, they came in sight of a curious-looking little craft, which lay at anchor somewhat out of the channel.

The Venture was a model of grace and symmetry for all that it was somewhat out of the usual line. Its hull was long and narrow and rakish.

This was of steel and made capable of resisting tremendous pressure, which was necessary when the depth at which it must travel was considered.

The upper part of the hull was studded with dead-eye windows. Above this a brass guard rail extended about the entire deck, from stem to stern.

In the stern the dome roofed structure of a great turret rose above the deck. In this there were great circular windows of plate glass. The roof of the dome was also sections of powerful glass, protected with steel frame.

Just forward of this turret, which formed the main cabin, was a small cabin or what might have been denominated the forecabin. Forward, in the bow, was a round topped structure of steel and glass, which was the pilot house.

Three slender masts to balance the ship were carried. They could be used to spread sail if necessary when on the surface.

There were many minor details which we will note in the course of the story, and turn our attention now to the interior of the boat.

The main cabin was provided with water tight vestibules. It was very richly furnished and was in fact, a miniature drawing-room. Here

Frank also kept the choicest of books, and even works of art and fine bric-a-brac.

The forecabin was the quarters of Barney and Pomp. It was furnished and equipped to suit the tastes of these faithful fellows. Just forward of this was a room devoted to stands of small arms and ammunition, for sometime in their travels the submarine voyagers might want to go ashore perhaps on a hostile coast. Then there was the dining saloon and the cooking galley.

Below the pilot house was the engine room, where the electric machinery was placed. Above, in the pilot house, was a great key board with levers and push buttons to guide and regulate the craft.

Also there was a powerful search-light, capable of penetrating a great distance under water. But the most wonderful thing of all was the system of air supply.

Frank's own invention this was by means of chemical generators placed in the hold, and from which pipes extended to every part of the ship.

Certain valves allowed the bad air to escape into the water as fast as it accumulated, thus keeping up a perfect circulation. Thus the submarine voyagers were enabled to remain under water an indefinite length of time.

The boat was made to rise or sink by means of a series of tanks, which filled by means of valves, and were emptied by pneumatic pressure.

Altogether the Venture was a most wonderful triumph of the inventor's genius. Certainly there was no other craft on earth like her.

And she had been planned and constructed in Frank Reade, Jr.'s own machine works in Readestown, U. S. A. Already the young American had received flattering offers from many governments for the plans of the Venture, and the secrets of the electric storage, but Frank had refused them all.

"I am not building warships but pleasure vessels," he said; "if the time should ever come that my country needed the secret for its defense against an invading foe, it shall have it. Otherwise I prefer to keep it myself."

Money was of no acceptance to the young inventor, for he was rich enough as it was. So he held on to his secret.

On board the Venture, Fingan, the detective, followed Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney. Pomp, the comical little negro, met them at the rail.

"Shure, naygur," cried Barney, boisterously, "it's happy ye'll be now, for it's off we are for the Injun Ocean this very minit!"

"Wha' am dat?" gasped the darky, looking interrogatively at Frank. "Am dat so, sah?"

"Yes," replied Frank, decisively. "Have everything ready as soon as possible. Is not everything ship-shape?"

"Aye, sah!" replied Pomp; "eberyfing am a'right in mah department."

"An' bejabbers, it's that same in moine," declared Barney. "Av yez say the worruld, Misther Frank, it's up anchor an' off now, sor."

"All right!" cried Frank; "let us get under way at once. How does that suit you, Mr. Fingan?"

"There is nothing like prompt work," replied the detective, "and you Yankees lead the world on that."

Barney and Pomp soon had the anchor easy, and then the Venture began to drift with the tide. Frank went into the pilot house and started the engines.

In a few moments the Venture was speeding like an arrow out of Liverpool harbor.

She was soon out in the open sea, and headed to the south. Frank's purpose was to proceed direct to the Cape of Good Hope, and thence into the Indian Ocean.

The submarine boat was sailing now on the surface, as she could proceed faster that way. Suddenly, as they were swiftly cutting the white caps, Barney sighted two huge vessels off to leeward which seemed to be hoove to.

"Shure, sor, mebbe they are in distress," declared Barney; "phwat do yez think, sor?"

"Stand over that way," said Frank; "we will signal them!"

This the young inventor did. Soon they were exchanging the code, and by it Frank read:

"We are in distress. We need help!"

"Lay a course for those two vessels," Frank ordered.

Fingan had been watching them intently. Now he said:

"I think I can understand it, sir. Those vessels belong to the Liverpool and Dublin line of steamers. Something is wrong with them."

"We'll soon find out!" said Frank, with determination.

CHAPTER III.

A SUBMARINE EXPLOIT.

THE submarine boat fairly raced toward the two steamers. In a few moments Fingan had recognized them.

"They are the Anglesea and the City of Limerick," he declared. "It looks to me as if they had divers aboard. What can it mean?"

The Venture rapidly drew nearer the two steamers. Then it was indeed seen that they were anchored, and at their gangway divers were going down and coming up in turns.

"Ahoy!" hailed the master of the Anglesea; "what craft is that?"

"The submarine boat Venture," replied Frank. "Captain Reade, of Readestown, U. S. A. Who are you?"

"The coast steamer Anglesea, Captain Cliff," was the reply. "We are diving for important papers on the sunken steamer Adaline. We

need a diving bell. Can we charter your vessel to go to Liverpool for it?"

"Oh, that explains it," exclaimed Fingan. "The Adaline is one of their steamers which sprung a seam in her planking, and went down about a week ago. Luckily the passengers were taken off by a passing schooner."

"Well," said Frank, slowly, "I don't see how we can go back to Liverpool for them, nor is it necessary either. Ahoy, the Anglesea!"

"Ahoy!" came back the reply.

"We cannot comply with your request."

"Where are you bound?"

"For the Indian Ocean."

"We will pay you well."

"I ask no pay, but if you will send a couple of your officers aboard this vessel, I will guarantee to get your papers for you."

For a moment a silence, evidently that of astonishment ensued. Then the captain of the Anglesea shouted:

"Will you repeat that statement?"

"Certainly," and Frank repeated his declaration.

There was a consultation on board the Anglesea. Then came back:

"Your statement is inexplicable. Have you divers aboard?"

"No," replied Frank; "but I have informed you once that this is a submarine boat!"

"A submarine boat?"

"Yes!"

There was visible excitement on the steamer's deck.

"Do you mean to say that you can travel under water?"

"Even so!" replied Frank; "however, if you do not wish to avail yourselves of the offer, why, we will go along!"

"Oh, but we shall be glad to!" cried Captain Cliff hastily. "Only you will pardon us for our surprise. A submarine boat is something unusual in this part of the world!"

A moment later a boat was lowered from the steamer's side and two of the officers came aboard the Venture. One of them was Captain Cliff himself.

Frank received them cordially, and then the captain explained the purpose of the diving efforts.

"There are valuable papers, belonging to the Bank of England in the sunken steamer's cabin," he said. "We are anxious to recover them, for if we do not our company will be held responsible and will be made bankrupt."

"Very well," said Frank; "we will see what we can do."

The captain looked about him curiously. Before Frank could enter the pilot house he said:

"I beg your pardon, but can you relieve my curiosity before we go further? I have never seen a submarine boat before."

"Certainly," replied Frank, and he showed them briefly over the Venture.

They were delighted as well as amazed.

"Then Frank said:

"Lower the boat, Barney. Everybody is in the cabin."

"All right, sor."

The Celt sprang to the keyboard.

In a moment the doors were shut hermetically, and then the Venture began to settle.

The waters rushed over her rail, and the two officers for a moment looked terrified.

Then there was a moment of darkness as the Venture went beneath the waves.

Barney pressed a button, however, and the next moment the cabin was flooded with electric light.

Then the search-light's glare was sent down through the watery depths. A marvelous scene was revealed.

It is not within the province of the story writer's pen to describe the marvels of the deep sea.

Of course, there were forests of submarine growth, grottoes and deep sea caverns, peopled with myriads of fish and curious monsters of all sizes.

But that upon which the gaze of all was fixed was the sunken vessel. She lay slightly listed to starboard in the arms of a reef.

Divers had reached her deck, but had been unable to stay long enough to enter the cabin on account of the pressure.

"That will not bother us!" said Frank. "We can stand the pressure at a far greater depth."

"Ah!" exclaimed Captain Cliff; "but how can we hope to enter the cabin without the aid of a diver?"

"Easy enough!" replied Frank. "I have a diving-suit which will resist the pressure. You shall see!"

"Indeed," exclaimed the captain in wonderment, "you are a genius, sir, I must say!"

In a few moments Frank had produced two diving suits of his own invention; and indeed they did differ greatly from the ordinary as he had said.

There was a helmet of the usual kind, but connected with it was a square, steel chest, worn upon the back like a knapsack. This contained a chemical generator which supplied the diver with air.

There was no entangling life line, no impediment, and the diver could remain under water an indefinite length of time. It gave a freedom of movement which could hardly be overestimated.

"I am going after the papers," said Frank, as he proceeded to don the helmet.

"I will tell you then exactly where in the cabin to find them," said Cliff.

"Ah, there is no need of that," declared Frank. "You shall go with me."

"I go with you?"

"Certainly!"

"But—am I well enough versed in diving——"

"Pshaw! You will be all right. I will look out for you in any event. Put on the suit, for we are losing time!"

Without further ado Cliff at once complied. In a few moments the two divers were ready.

They entered the vestibule and closed the cabin door behind them. Then Frank pressed a valve which at once flooded the vestibule.

Then he opened the outer door and walked out on deck. The captain followed him.

It required some moments for Cliff to get accustomed to the pressure. Then he followed Frank over the rail and they stood on the sandy bottom of the sea.

They wore leaden shoes, of course, which helped to hold them down safely. It was much like walking on air, so buoyant did the water make them.

But they had soon reached the side of the sunken vessel. It became now a question as to how to get on deck.

But a part of the reef rose to the very verge of the deck, and by clambering up this they boarded the vessel. Thus far all was well.

Now Captain Cliff took the lead. He advanced to the cabin stairs of the sunken steamer.

A myriad of small fish rushed up these, but the captain pressed down them and soon stood in the cabin.

Then he spoke to Frank. But he speedily found that he was not heard. He raised his voice.

It was of no use.

Then he came along and placed his helmet close to Frank's. In this manner, by loud shouting, they could make each other hear.

"We shall find the papers in the captain's cabin!" he said; "that is the one beyond this!"

"All right!" agreed Frank, "lead the way."

They passed into the next cabin. This was the captain's. The desk yet stood as it had been left, with papers and other articles, though soaked, yet intact.

It did not take Cliff long to find what he wanted.

He found the valuable papers in a tin box in the safe, the combination of which he had been given. Then he rescued the vessel's log.

On the tip of each helmet the two divers had a powerful electric light. These were of service in the cabin, which would otherwise have been as dark as pitch.

Captain Cliff had accomplished his ends, and now placing his helmet close to Frank's, shouted:

"All right; I have got all I came for!"

"Then we will go back!"

"I am ready!"

In a few moments they were again on deck. Though it was a great distance from the sunken vessel's rail to the sands below, they did not hesitate to drop.

They sailed down as lightly as a feather, and then started for the Venture.

A few moments more, and they were back in the vestibule. Frank shut the deck door and turned on the valve.

Instantly pneumatic pressure forced the water out of the vestibule. Then the two divers entered the cabin safely.

The expedition had been a success. A more delighted man than Captain Cliff could not be imagined.

"Our company will pay you a large reward if you will accept it, Mr. Reade," he declared; "this is a great service you have rendered us!"

"I don't want it," replied Frank, bluntly. "Indeed, I am now upon an errand very similar to this."

"Indeed!"

With this Frank detailed the story of the missing Corsair. Cliff listened with interest, and then said:

"I'll wager, Mr. Reade, that I can tell you the fate of your ship."

Fingan was now interested.

"I shall be glad to know," said Frank.

"Well," said Cliff, slowly, "judging from her position and the locality where she was last seen, I would not be afraid to wager that she is in the Black Whirlpool."

"The Black Whirlpool!" exclaimed Frank, in surprise.

"Yes, that is only two hundred miles away from the Tropic. Very likely she was blown thither and is even now utterly unable to escape."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLACK WHIRLPOOL.

FRANK was interested.

"The Black Whirlpool!" he exclaimed. "I have heard much of it; but I never supposed that it was a serious one."

"Serious!" exclaimed Cliff in amazement. "There is not another such maelstrom on earth! The Black Whirlpool easily beats them all."

"Strange that I should not have heard of it before," said Frank. "It is not, to my knowledge, recorded upon any chart."

"Ah, that is true," replied the captain, "for a very good reason. It has only sprung into existence within a year or less past."

"Oh, that explains it then!" exclaimed Frank. "I thought it strange. Have you ever visited the Whirlpool?"

"Not I; but one of our officers was in those waters aboard a war-ship when an Italian bark went into the Whirlpool. It was unable to beat its way out, nor could the war-ship do aught to save it for fear of getting into the deadly swirl itself."

Both Frank and Fingan were much surprised.

"Is it possible that the current is so powerful that a steam vessel can make no way against it?" asked the detective.

"That is the report," replied Cliff; "the current is said at its very verge to exceed twenty knots an hour. It can be easily distinguished from the outer and calmer waters by a great line of foam which extends far out of sight in both directions. The maelstrom must therefore cover hundreds of miles!"

"Then anything which gets into its clutches must be forever swept round and round in that awful circle until the vortex is reached."

"Just so!" replied Cliff. "You can see how easy it would be for a vessel on a dark night, or running before a gale, to be carried over the verge into the awful circle of death. I would not be at all surprised if your missing Corsair was in the depths of the Black Whirlpool."

"In that case," said Frank, with a dubious expression, "I don't see how we are going to be able to render her assistance or even reach her if she is at the bottom of the sea!"

"We can try," persisted Fingan.

"Indeed, my surmise may not be of value!" said the captain, "and she may be yet afloat somewhere, or perhaps sunk in some other part of the ocean!"

"I should think that the Black Whirlpool would be a great menace to navigators in that part of the world," declared Frank; "something ought to be done to warn seamen all over the world."

"Such a movement would be necessarily slow!" declared the captain of the Anglesea. "I believe that steps are rapidly being taken to that end."

A short while later Captain Cliff returned to the Anglesea with profuse thanks for the service done. Then the submarine boat again set out to the southward.

The more Frank pondered upon the matter, the more certain he became that this had been the fate of the Corsair.

That such a mighty spasm of nature had occurred in any part of the earth without having attracted more attention, was to him strange enough. Certainly here was a menace to navigation unequalled on the globe.

Without inquiring into the strange revulsion of Nature which had caused this mighty whirlpool, Frank could see how easy it might have been for the Corsair to have drifted into it.

If the lost ship was in the big whirlpool, it seemed certain that it was indeed lost. What aid they could give it, or in fact how they could ever contrive to reach it, remained to be seen.

From this moment the submarine voyagers could give thought or conversation to no other subject. The Black Whirlpool became the all engrossing topic.

The little Venture made tremendous speed on her southward way, but to the voyagers she seemed to creep.

Frank had once half decided to take the route through the Straits of Gibraltar, the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal; but he finally decided that the shortest route after all would be via Cape of Good Hope.

Day after day the little craft sped on along the African coast. Frank kept fairly well into the shore waters, so that the Venture would encounter on an average smoother seas.

Cape Verde was sighted, and then the Venture bore into the waters of the Gulf of Guinea.

Many vessels were met and some spoken. Then the Venture crossed the Equator and was in southern seas.

It was now a fairly, straight line southeast to the Cape of Good Hope. On sailed the Venture.

All things must have an end.

And so finally the little headland of Cape Town was sighted, and the Venture stood out to round the cape.

For Frank had no intention of stopping at Cape Town. His purpose was to proceed as rapidly as possible to the locality of the Black Whirlpool.

The larger part of the trip had been accomplished, however. Once rounded into the Indian Ocean, the Venture began to encounter calm seas, and consequently accelerated her progress.

Ships now were seldom sighted.

They were really out of the beaten track, for Frank bore far to the south of the Tropic of Capricorn, going even below the forty-fifth parallel of south latitude.

The lowest course pursued by ships was along the fortieth parallel. No vessels ventured below this except on rare occasions, for the air was cold and the seas tempestuous, the farther south one went.

Frank knew that the Black Whirlpool was not on or above the fortieth parallel, for if so it would be in the direct path of China going vessels.

Therefore it must be south of the fortieth parallel, and probably between that parallel and the Kerguelen Islands. There the seas were dark and heavy, which no doubt had won for the maelstrom the name of the Black Whirlpool.

That the Corsair had been blown as far out of her course as this, seemed at first improbable. But there was a possibility that her engines had given out, or that she had been so shattered by the storm, that control of her was utterly lost.

"If she has gone down in the Black Whirlpool," declared Frank, "I fear we shall have our labor for our pains."

"Perhaps," suggested Fingan, "that under the sea we might with safety invade the whirling current."

"I think not," differed Frank; "the current should be stronger the deeper it runs."

"It ought also to contract," argued the detective. "Perhaps on the bottom we might approach nearer the vortex. What is your theory of the vortex?"

"My theory of the whirlpool itself," said Frank, "is that a number of powerful conflicting currents here meet, and in their strife make the terrible vortex."

"Well, the vortex?"

"Why, it strikes the bed of the sea and must be shattered, and thence be converted into deep sea currents, which shoot in all directions."

"A very good theory," agreed the detective, "and no doubt correct. But now, when we think of it, the Corsair sucked down in the vortex, goes to the bottom, does she not?"

"Yes."

"Then where does she go?"

"As far as some powerful deep sea current may be able to carry her. I see your point. It is that the deep sea currents, going in different directions, may not have the power of those on the surface, and which make the whirlpool."

"You have my idea exactly," said the detective, "that is my hope. It may be a scant one."

"Let us hope that it will be realized," declared Frank. "We will certainly do all we can to bring it about."

Below the fortieth parallel, the submarine boat began to encounter black rolling seas.

One morning a sail was sighted to the southward.

As near as could be made out, she was an English trading ship, which had probably been blown out of her course in coming from Australia to the Cape.

Frank was determined to speak her. It occurred to him that he might get some news relative to the Whirlpool.

So he bore down toward her and made a signal.

This was answered and the two vessels rapidly drew nearer. An hour later they were within hailing distance.

Then Frank appeared on the turret and shouted:

"Ship ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" came back.

"What ship are you?"

"The brig Rosemary, of Liverpool, England! Who are you?"

"The submarine boat Venture!"

"All well on board?"

"Clean bill! How are you?"

"All well, and a cargo of hides from Melbourne for London. Bon voyage!"

The skipper was about to retire from the shrouds when Frank shouted:

"Ahoy—ahoy!"

"Ay—ay!"

"Do you know of such a thing in these waters as the Black Whirlpool?"

There was a moment's silence.

"Ay—ay!" the reply came back. "Forty miles about sou'east! Keep clear of that!"

"Ay—ay, thanks!" replied Frank.

Then the brig filled away northward, and the submarine boat started off to the southeast.

All was now excitement.

All eyes were upon the horizon. The Venture sailed on for an hour and a half.

Then a loud cry came from Barney who was forward with a glass.

"Shure, sor, I see it. It's loike a line av breakers on a lee shore!"

This was true.

The great white line, forming a semi-circle on the horizon, looked exactly like breakers. A coast might have been beyond them.

Nearer every moment the Venture drew to the whirlpool. It was an impressive spectacle.

This was rendered doubly so by the thought that the fate of a vessel which should pass beyond that white line would be sealed.

She would be in the clutch of a Cyclops in the grasp of Doom, and her portion would be death and destruction.

So the submarine voyagers gazed with mingled sensations upon the startling spectacle spread before them.

CHAPTER V.

A VICTIM OF THE WHIRLPOOL.

FINGAN was the first to speak.

"It is easy," he said, "to see how a vessel in the night, or driven by a storm, would sail into the clutches of this monster; but in daylight and a fair sea, there would be little danger."

"That is true," agreed Frank. "If the Corsair got into the whirlpool, it was under some such conditions."

"So I believe."

Frank now took the wheel.

He ventured as near to the dangerous circle as he dared. The little boat pitched and tossed violently with the fury and force of the current.

Beyond the white foam line the waves were seen rushing furiously in one direction, madly, turbulently. They seemed to trend downward. The center of the whirlpool was beyond the horizon, but the

water line was so depressed that it had the appearance of a huge bowl.

The vengeful character of the hissing waters could be readily seen. The fate of any craft in their clutches could not but be realized.

And even as the voyagers gazed upon the scene, suddenly Pomp shouted:

"Hi—hi! dere am a lily boat turned upside down, Marse Frank."

This was true.

A ship's boat, bottom upward, went sailing by in the waste of waters. Next came a heap of wreckage.

This was evidence that some vessel had fallen a victim to the terrible whirlpool. What of the crew?

Who could tell?

Was the ship already in that dread vortex? Had she gone down to her awful fate in that final deep sea plunge.

While this question was in the thoughts of all, suddenly Pomp gave another cry:

"Fo' de lan's sakes! Dere am de ship itself!"

All eyes were turned in the direction indicated by the dargy. Sure enough, the dismantled hull of a ship was seen at least four miles out in the maelstrom, and being rapidly carried along by the flood.

Not a sign of living being was seen aboard her. And yet the distance and the darkness of the sea might have precluded this.

For aught they knew, there might be a score of unfortunate souls aboard the wreck. If so, their doom was written.

The submarine voyagers watched the vessel with a strange fascination. When she had drifted from view, all drew a deep breath, and Frank said:

"Her fate is sealed!"

"You are right," agreed Fingan; "perhaps the Corsair is somewhere in that fearful waste, drifting the same."

"Ah, but she has more likely gone into the vortex."

"It is likely. Yet we have as yet no means of knowing just how long a vessel will drift in this fearful current."

"That is true."

"What do you propose to do now, Mr. Reade?"

"Well," said Frank, thoughtfully, "that is not an easy problem to solve. But I have an idea that it would be well to sail along the verge of the whirlpool for a ways."

"Very good."

So the Venture proceeded to sail along the verge of the maelstrom. For miles they kept on.

Soon darkness began to shut down. The search-light could easily locate the line of the maelstrom, but Frank thought it best to put to the northward for five or six miles.

This he did and the Venture hove to, to wait for daylight.

A raw wind had sprung up from the southeast, and the sky had become overcast. There were symptoms of a gale.

Frank did not experience any fears, for he knew that he had but to send the Venture to the bottom to escape the peril.

He held the Venture head on to the gale and she held her own well.

And thus the night wore on.

Near midnight all turned in save Barney, who took his place at the wheel. The blackness of the night was intense.

But the search-light was powerful enough to disperse the gloom for a distance of a mile in any direction. This the Irishman constantly used.

And once turning it to the northward, he swept it around to the east, whither the wind had shifted.

A sight met his gaze which gave him a sudden, mighty thrill.

For a moment he gasped and was unable to act. Then he recovered, and, in a horrified tone, exclaimed:

"Mither av Moses! Pwhat the devil are they thinkin' of?"

Then he pressed a button which caused a big gong in the cabin to ring furiously.

This was the alarm which was to arouse all on board, and it did its work effectually. All came tumbling out of their berths.

In a moment Frank was in the pilot house.

"What is wrong, Barney?" he asked sharply.

"Shure, sor, cast yer eye out this way," and the Celt sent the rays of the search-light shooting out over the waste of waters.

Frank gave a horrified cry.

"A ship!" he cried. "She is running before the gale and straight for the whirlpool; she does not know her danger!"

"Shure, sor, that's phwat I thought," cried Barney. "If she did, shure she'd be afther goin' another way!"

"If she keeps on she is lost," cried Frank; "we must save her! We must warn her!"

"Shure, sor, that's roight!"

"Head to cross her course; send up some rockets! Give her the danger signal!"

Barney and Pomp both sprung to obey orders, Frank took the wheel, and Fingan remained beside him.

Away shot the submarine boat to cross the bow of the scudding ship. She carried an undue amount of canvas for such a gale.

"They are mad!" exclaimed the detective. "The stanchest ship in the world would hardly think of running under such a press of sail."

"It will carry her over the line into the whirlpool in less than twenty minutes," declared Frank. "Set up the rockets, Barney!"

Frank used the search-light with the signal code. Rockets were sent up, but the vessel did not change her course until the submarine boat crossed her bow not a hundred yards away.

Then she came up an instant into the wind, and a stentorian voice bawled:

"Who the devil are you? What do you want?"

"You are going into danger," shouted Frank; "bear off to the north or you'll be into the great whirlpool!"

A jeering laugh came back.

"Is that all you want?" was the reply. "We know our course. Au Revoir!"

"Listen to reason!" shouted Frank. "Man, if you are such, don't go madly to your doom. Death is ahead of you. The great whirlpool! Turn your course, for the love of God!"

But no answer was deigned. Frank saw the truth that the skipper of the craft felt sure of his course, and would not credit the story of a whirlpool. Doubtless he thought those on board the submarine boat either mad, or pirates. In the latter case he would not stop for his own safety.

So on swept the ship toward the fatal line.

The Venture followed swiftly, while Frank exhorted and entreated. But it was all in vain.

"My soul! my soul!" he groaned. "What folly is theirs? They are going to their death."

"Which is no fault of ours," said Fingan, sententiously.

"No!" agreed Frank, "it is the fault of that perverse blockhead of a skipper, who thinks he knows it all. There are innocent souls on board there, whom he is carrying to their death."

But there was no help for it. The Venture was now obliged to turn back, for the white line of the whirlpool was near at hand.

The glare of the search-light showed the ship racing before the gale. The next moment she was in the whirlpool.

She was seen to stagger a moment as the current, more powerful than the wind, caught her. Rudder was of no avail, and the two opposing forces brought her nearly beam ends to the waters. Then her mainsail belched forth into the breeze and her topsails went into ribbons.

In less time than it takes to tell it she was drifting in the maelstrom, clean of sails and in a pitiable condition. Now, too late, her skipper began to realize his mistake.

Rockets went up from her deck. Frank answered them, but he could afford no aid.

For an hour the lights of the doomed craft were seen. Then she vanished beyond the horizon.

The submarine voyagers could not reproach themselves.

They had done all in their power. It was alone the fault of the strong-headed skipper.

The gale now began to increase in fury, and Frank concluded to go beneath the surface to escape it. So he closed the doors and sealed the boat hermetically.

Then he pressed the lever and the boat went down. The search-light showed the bottom in fully three thousand feet of water.

A full half mile from the surface they were!

It was a remarkable thing to reflect upon that half a mile of water was over their heads. Yet the nerves of all were steady.

Of course the pressure upon the boat was tremendous, but she had been constructed for the purpose of standing a very much greater pressure.

The bed of the ocean here was totally devoid of any submarine growth. The floor of the sea was swept as clean as could be by the current from the maelstrom, which could even here be plainly felt.

This was an outward current, so there was no risk in following it. How far the Venture could go before the resistance would be too powerful remained to be seen.

Frank decided to test it, and, as there was no more sleep for any in the party that night, he sent the Venture ahead upon a voyage of discovery.

CHAPTER VI.

A SLIGHT MISTAKE.

THEY were now directly under the outer edge of the maelstrom. And the theory of Fingan was proven correct.

At the bottom of the ocean the currents were all outward, owing, no doubt, to the pressure of the waters thrown down and out in the vortex.

Just how near it would be safe or possible to approach to the vortex it was not quite clear. But Frank was determined to know.

So the Venture pushed on resolutely against the current.

It grew stronger every moment, and the sandy floor of the sea looked as if swept by a broom.

For an hour the Venture breasted the current.

Then a great cry went up from Fingan, the detective.

"The Corsair!"

It was a startling moment. All eyes rested upon the black hull of a sunken ship dead ahead.

Masts were all by the board, and her decks were heaped with wreckage. She was exactly the type and build of the Corsair.

The search-light traversed her from stem to stern. Every detail was eagerly noted.

"Well," said Frank, "what do you think of it, Mr. Fingan? I don't know the Corsair myself."

"It answers every description," replied the detective, tremblingly.

"I don't think there is any doubt of it. She is the Corsair."

"In that event our quest is ended."

"But we are not sure. Again, we have not recovered the papers. We must find the body of Dingley to do that."

"You are right," agreed Frank. "We will anchor alongside that craft and pay her a visit."

Frank sailed the Venture around to the stern of the sunken ship. There he allowed her to rest on the bottom.

He tried in vain to locate the name of the sunken vessel with the search-light.

But Fingan felt extremely sure that she was the Corsair, so Frank was content. He speedily made preparations to pay her a visit.

He brought out diving suits for two. One was for himself and the other for Fingan.

They speedily donned them and equipped themselves for the trip to the sunken ship. Besides an ax and a knife, each carried a coil of rope.

Entering the vestibule they were soon outside.

It required four or five minutes to get used to the pressure, blood even streaming from Fingan's nostrils. The first unpleasant effects over, they started for the ship.

It was by no means easy to reach it in that varying current, but finally they succeeded. Frank found a rope dangling from the cat-heads by which he ascended to the deck.

Fingan followed him and they stood on the deck of the sunken ship. The detective was never more sure that it was the Corsair.

The deck of the sunken vessel presented a rough spectacle. It was heaped with the debris of the fallen rigging and broken timbers and spars.

Slowly the two divers made their way to the companion stairs. They saw no signs of dead bodies, nor, indeed, did they expect this on the deck.

For the current there would have swept them away long since. What if Dingley's body had also gone thus?

It would certainly be difficult to find the evidence in that case. Indeed it would be almost impossible.

But Fingan was eager to get into the cabin.

So they stumbled down the stairs, their helmet lamps showing all clearly enough. Then they stood in the cabin.

Strange to say, it contained the bodies of none of the crew or passengers, if there had been such. It looked as if the entire crew had rushed on deck and been swept away by the current.

Fingan, however, pushed his way to the captain's cabin beyond. Upon a table lay the log book.

It was water soaked, and the ink had run so that the entries were almost illegible. But the names of the vessel and its captain were quite plain.

One glance was enough and settled all doubts.

"Log of the Monmouth,

"Captain Leslie Van Eyke,

"Dartmouth, England."

Neither Frank nor the detective were interested further. They did not attempt to read the log.

The sunken vessel was not the Corsair and this was enough. Frank proceeded to examine the captain's safe ere taking their leave.

There were several packages of Bank of England notes and a box of silver coins. The notes were too water soaked, but the divers took a small bag of gold sovereigns and the silver.

Whether the ship had other treasure or not, they did not pause to ascertain.

Back to the deck they made their way. In a few moments they were again sliding down over the side.

It was not long before they were again in the cabin of the Venture. Barney and Pomp were delighted to welcome them safely back.

"Shure, sor, an' it wasn't the Corsair afther all," cried Barney.

"Faith, that's too bad! An' we must look further and mebbe fare worse, sor."

"Golly!" sniffed Pomp, "I don't see how we am gwine to fare wuss."

"Begorra, there's a good many things a bloind man can't see," retorted Barney.

"I am no mo' blin' than yo' is," retaliated Pomp. "You'se nuffin' but a no count fishman, anyway."

"Bejabsers, av yez cast any more reflections on me nationality, I'll break the face off yez!"

"Mebbe yo' will, chile. I tell yo' to keep way from me, yo' hear!"

"Come, come, you rascals!" laughed Frank; "what do you mean? I thought you were glad to see us safely back!"

Barney and Pomp made wry grimaces at each other, all of which augured a ruction in the near future.

It might be safe to say that neither was serious: but they were fond of nagging each other, and winding up with a rough and tumble.

They would surely have done this now but for Frank's restraining presence. But Barney was obliged to go back to the pilot house and Pomp to the galley.

Then the Venture started away once more upon her exploring tour.

Soon, however, the current grew so strong that they could go no further in that direction. Then the boat was obliged to turn back.

Another current, however, was speedily found, and Frank went off at another angle. After sailing about in this way for hours, however, he was obliged to pause from sheer exhaustion.

"Enough!" he declared. "We have all overdone. Let us seek rest for four or five hours. Then we shall be able to go to work with fresh zest!"

"A capital idea!" agreed Fingan; "why not anchor right here, Mr. Reader?"

"As good a place as any!"

So the boat anchored on the spot, and the voyagers again sought their staterooms for much needed sleep. All save Barney and Pomp.

The former was on guard, the latter was awake on purpose to secure a settlement of the question of a few hours previous.

Barney suspected this and was on his guard.

He was determined not to be caught napping. So when Pomp came sauntering into the pilot house a while later the Celt kept his eyes on him.

The coon, however, was not the one to procrastinate. He brought the subject to a head at once.

"Yoh, I'ish," he said insinuatingly, "mebbe yo' don' flink much ob us cullud foxes, eh?"

Barney shifted his quid coolly.

"Yez kin paste that in yer hat av yez loike," he declared, "an' take it to yersilf, too."

Pomp tossed his head like a wild bull ready for the fray.

"I kin jes' tell yo' suffin', sah," he went on. "De cullud people am allus de superior ob any po' white trash—"

"Whurrool!" shouted Barney. "That's an insult to the Oirish people, to be shure, an' I've a moind to make yez ate them wor-ruds!"

"Huh!" sniffed Pomp. "I'se heerd dat kin' ob talk long enuff! Why don't yo' act, sah?"

"Bejabbers I will!" cried the Celt, throwing off his coat; "here's bad cess to yez fer a murtherin' blatherskite. Look out fer yersilf!"

Barney made a biff at the coon. Pomp dodged it and then they clinched. A terrific struggle followed.

They rolled down the pilot-house steps and into the cabin. Then they panted and tugged and strained, while neither held the advantage.

Now up and now down they went. It was a wonder that the noise they made did not wake the others.

But luckily Frank and Fingan were too tired to wake easily. So Barney and Pomp had a clear course.

And a gay time it was which they had. At least in their own estimation. Others might think different.

They wrestled and tugged until too tired to do aught but lie panting on the carpeted floor. They were completely exhausted.

And thus they lay, glaring at each other fiercely.

"Will yo' 'pologize, sah?" puffed Pomp.

"Shure, I'll ate me hat first," retorted Barney.

"Den you ain' had enuff?"

"Whin I git enough, yez will be a candidate fer the hospital."

And then they went at it again, but rather feebly. But while thus engaged a catastrophe brought them to their startled senses.

A terrific shock shook the Venture from stem to stern. Then every light on board went out and left the boat in total darkness.

It was a thrilling moment.

The Venture seemed to be suddenly lifted in giant hands and hurled onward.

"Massy Lordy!" gasped Pomp; "wha' am de mattah?"

"Be me sowl, somethin' has happened to the boat!" gasped Barney, "an' it's all our fault fer skylarkin' here whoile we ought to have been on watch. Ah, lackaday, but Misther Frank will niver loike it at all. Shure, he'll have the skin av us both!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE DHOW.

THE terrific shock which the boat received was much as if some tremendous blow had been given it with a giant hammer or weapon.

It fairly threw Frank Reade, Jr., out of his bunk. In a moment he was in the cabin, excitedly shouting:

"What is the matter? What has happened?"

Barney had rushed into the pilot house. The Celt fumbled over the key-board for the lever which should set the lights going again.

"Shure, sor," he cried, "somethin' has run into the Venture, sor. Divil a bit do I know what it was, sor!"

"Well, we'll find out!" cried Frank, angrily; "how is it you were not on duty. Ah, Pomp, you here too? I see! You rascals have been skylarking again."

"Oh, Marse Frank, I'se drefull sorry," cried Pomp, wildly. "We nebber flink dere be anyting wrong. We'se de ones to blame, sah."

"I thought so! Then hustle around, both of you, and get matters to rights again! Turn on those lights, Barney!"

"Shure, sor, I'm afther thryin' to do that same, but the divil's-in-thim!"

Frank groped his way into the pilot house. He found the electric light lever and pressed it.

The lights did not show. Something was wrong.

The boat was now quite still. But Frank was anxious to know what the situation was outside just the same.

The shock of the collision had evidently disarranged the wires. This he felt sure.

The way to remedy this was to go down to the dynamo room and renew the broken connection. But it was dangerous to go fooling around dynamos in the dark.

So he groped around until he found a lantern on a shelf near. The little battery which operated it was in working order, so he lost no time in turning it on.

With this he could see nothing beyond the pilot house window, of course, but he speedily located the break in the connections and descended to the engine room to repair it.

This required but a few moments. Then he went back to the pilot house and turned on the current.

The lights flashed up again. Peering through the pilot house window, Frank beheld a startling state of things.

A huge black object lay across the bow of the submarine boat. It required some moment's scrutiny to make out what it was.

"Why, it is a schooner or a vessel of that size," declared Fingan.

"No," said Frank, "it is an Indian dhow or coasting vessel. How did it ever come here?"

The dhow seemed to literally lay across the bow of the Venture, but that this was not true Frank very speedily discovered.

He backed the engines of the Venture. To his surprise she did not move.

"Why, we are anchored!" he exclaimed.

Then he turned the glare of the search-light full upon the dhow. He saw a surprising state of affairs.

The ram of the Venture was deeply imbedded in the hull of the dhow. How had this been done? A few moments' reflection told Frank the truth.

The dhow, carried along in the deep current, had crashed into the ram of the submarine boat and became impaled there. This explained the shock which had aroused all on board.

Here was a predicament.

The Venture was anchored.

Her engines were certainly not powerful enough to break the connection by backing away. What was to be done?

It was a puzzle.

Moreover, the predicament was a most serious one. How to extricate the ram of the submarine boat was no light question.

Of course this must be done if they hoped to continue their deep sea travels.

Frank was in a by no means amiable frame of mind.

He blamed Barney largely for his carelessness. The Celt naturally felt very conscience-stricken.

"Shure, Mr. Frank, I'll go out there an' cut the ram out wid an ax," cried the Celt.

"Nonsense!" said Frank, testily. "You could never do that! But something must be done! Bring out two diving suits! You and I will go out and look the ground over!"

Barney hastened to obey.

In a few moments he reappeared with the suits. Then he and Frank went out on deck.

The pressure of the current was tremendous, and they were obliged to connect themselves with the rail of the submarine boat by means of ropes, to prevent being washed away.

Finally Frank climbed out on the ram and examined its grip on the dhow. He saw that it had been driven full ten feet into the timbers of the other vessel.

This gave a powerful hold, and he saw that to saw or cut the ram out would be a dangerous and an interminable job.

Another idea had occurred to him, and this was to make use of a dynamite cartridge. This, of course, would be a dangerous expedient, but a radical one.

He studied the position of the dhow carefully, and then decided to make the attempt. Dangerous as it seemed, it was yet the most logical plan.

So he went back to the cabin to get dynamite and lay a wire. He imparted his plan to Fingan.

"Risky!" said the detective.

"I know it, but it will be immediate," said Frank.

"You know best. But—I say!"

"Well?"

"Is not that a Malay dhow?"

"Yes."

"Are they not generally pirate vessels?"

"Yes."

"Do you suppose it would be worth while to ransack her for treasure? You know pirates are supposed to carry valuable spoils."

"You may do so if you choose," said Frank. "While I am getting the dynamite ready you and Barney can do the exploring."

"Good!" cried the detective, with alacrity, "but—"

"What?"

"Don't you blow that vessel up while we are on board."

"Pshaw! Of course I would not. Go along and be lively."

Barney embraced the idea readily. So Fingan donned a diving suit and they set forth.

It did not take them long to get aboard the dhow. She was a very light built craft—like all Malay vessels—and carried only half of her hull decked over.

This was forward, and constituted the cabin. The door opened from the vessel's waist.

Fingan and Barney entered.

No bodies were in the dingy cabin; but it was fitted up in the Eastern fashion, with tawdry hangings of madras cloth, and chairs and divans.

The two men thoroughly explored the place, and it was not until after some while that they found a large sandal wood chest far forward. It was secured with a heavy lock.

But Barney broke this with his ax and the lid was lifted. A startling sight was revealed.

Money lay before them in profusion. There was a heap of miscellaneous coins of all nations, gold, silver and even copper. There were bits of jewelry, trinkets, and a tin box which contained probably some perishable valuables.

The two divers made no attempt to count the heap of coin. It was certain that there were thousands of dollars in the heap.

"Bejabbers I'll tell yez phwat we'll do!" cried Baaney. "We'll take it aboard the Venture and sometime we'll count it up and divoide it!"

"That's agreeable!" said Fingan, "here goes!"

They lifted the chest and carried it out of the cabin of the dhow. It was a slow and laborious job, but they finally got it aboard the Venture.

By this time Frank had placed the dynamite cartridge and laid the wire. He went back to the pilot house.

It was a critical moment.

All depended upon the success of that attempt. If the cartridge, as intended, simply split the hull of the derelict, and did no damage to the ram, all would be well.

There was the chance.

But Frank was determined to accept it. So he drew a deep breath and pressed the electric button.

There was a tremendous shock, the Venture heaved and plunged, and the water surged so fiercely around the craft that nothing could be seen beyond the pilot house window.

For a full minute this lasted.

Then Frank pressed the motor lever. The submarine boat answered buoyantly.

She backed slowly away for some yards, and the glare of the searchlight was thrown ahead.

It was a joyful sight which met the gaze of all.

The dhow lay in halves, split as neatly as could be. The ram of the Venture had suffered no injury whatever.

The explosion of the dynamite cartridge was a complete success, and the Venture was relieved from her predicament.

Frank did not go back to his berth, nor did any of the others. It was decided to go ahead once more.

So again the submarine boat shot away through the current of the whirlpool. She dodged in every direction, keeping always within the range of the whirlpool.

He approached a number of times as near the vortex as he dared, but yet no sign of the Corsair was found.

Vessels of various kinds were encountered in great numbers, but the Corsair was not among them.

And after a week of submarine search of this kind, Frank declared:

"It is of no use! I don't believe the Corsair got into the whirlpool at all!"

"You don't?" asked Fingan.

"I do not! If she had, it seems as if we had ought to have come across her before this!"

"But suppose she is yet on the surface?" advanced the detective.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LEAK.

"Of course there is that possibility," admitted Frank, "but it is a vague one. She must have long since been sucked into the vortex."

"But has our search been sufficiently thorough?"

"I don't see why," said Frank. "We have made a complete circuit of the whirlpool's vortex, and searched through most of its currents, even to their very verge. The Corsair being a heavy vessel, ought not to have been swept very far from the vortex."

"That is true," admitted Fingan. "What conclusion may we draw?"

"That the Corsair plainly did not get into the whirlpool."

"Then she sank in some other part of the ocean."

"If she went to the bottom. It is possible, you know, that she may yet be adrift somewhere."

"Yes, that is true."

The detective appeared to be keenly disappointed. He was thoughtful for some time.

"Finally he said:

"Suppose we leave the whirlpool and take up some other clew?"

"What shall it be?"

"Well, we know the latitude in which the ship was last seen?"

"Yes!"

"Then suppose we figure out the distance she would be apt to run, the effect of the typhoon upon her course, and make a blind search for her in that vicinity."

"In the deep sea?"

"Yes!"

"Very well!" agreed Frank, "we will do that. We will give up all quest in the whirlpool."

"It may be a mistake," said Fingan, "but I don't believe it. I don't think the Corsair was lost in the whirlpool at all!"

"Well, if she was, it is very strange that we have not found any trace of her."

"Exactly."

With this they began to figure up the likely position of the Corsair after being overtaken by the hurricane, assuming that such a thing had happened.

Frank reckoned upon a point one hundred miles south of the Tropic of Capricorn. Fingan agreed to this.

Then the submarine boat was headed to the northward. In a few hours she was clear of the deep sea currents and safe to go to the surface, had such a thing been desired.

But Frank had decided to travel under the surface, for there was

always the chance of coming across the lost ship if she was really at the bottom of the sea.

It was a quest which was not at all of an encouraging sort. It was indeed a sort of forlorn hope.

But Fingan was still confident. His courage was most wonderful. He would not abandon the possibility.

So the Whirlpool was abandoned. For a number of days the submarine boat traveled on through the deep sea, and many strange and curious sights were beheld.

And one day Frank announced that they had reached the point approximated by himself and Fingan as the likely spot for the Corsair to have foundered.

The bed of the sea here was broken with deep valleys or sinks, and there were vast forests of coral growth. The waters were dark and forbidding.

Frank reckoned that they were miles from the surface. In this dismal depth the submarine boat groped about, seeking blindly for the lost ship.

Days passed in disappointing quest. The Venture, like a huge glow-worm, went prowling through the submarine valleys.

And while thus groping about what came near proving a fatal accident occurred.

The Venture was passing a wide-mouthed sea cave, when suddenly there darted out from it a strange sea monster which was as large and heavy as a sperm whale.

In appearance it was a cross between a shark and a crocodile. Its great jaws were wide open.

For a moment Frank thought it would grip the bow of the ship with those fearful rows of teeth. But it did not.

Instead, it struck the Venture a terrific blow just abaft the pilot house.

The shock was a fearful one.

So heavy was the monster that the submarine boat was thrown upon its side, and everything movable on board went crashing to the starboard.

The monster, very fortunately, made only this one attack, and then darted away into the depths.

It had been a close call, for had the creature renewed its attacks, it must have crushed in the side of the boat, and terminated the career of all on board.

The Venture righted herself slowly. The voyagers were stunned by the blow.

"Great guns!" exclaimed Fingan; "I thought we were going to perdition then."

"And so did I," agreed Frank. "That was a foe worthy of our steel. What sort of a reptile could it have been?"

"I don't know, but I don't want to see it again."

"Be me sowl!" cried Barney, "I thought the ind av the world had come!"

"Golly," growled Pomp, "it a'most broke mah back!"

Slowly the Venture righted herself. Then she came to a full stop.

"Eh?" exclaimed Frank; "what is the meaning of that! Have we broken the machinery again?"

The young inventor plunged into the engine room. He made a swift examination of the engines.

One of the parallels forward had become dislodged. It required all the strength of all to replace it.

This done, the Venture was able to proceed once more. This was believed to be all the harm done until Frank went forward into the hold.

Then he gave a sharp cry.

There was a splashing of water on the floor. In an instant he guessed the awful truth.

The submarine boat had sprung a leak.

The announcement for a moment appalled the voyagers. Frank alone was cool and collected.

Hastily he began to trace the stream of water.

He knew that all depended upon the locality of the leak. He carefully examined the steel hull.

Then he discovered, with a thrill of relief, that the leak came from overhead. One of the deck plates where the ram joined the hull of the boat had become sprung.

At once Frank sprang into the pilot house.

"What are you going to do?" asked Fingan.

"I am going to the surface."

"To the surface?"

"Yes."

"Is the leak a serious one?"

"Not at all."

Up sprang the submarine boat. They were at a great depth, and it was a long way to the surface.

But finally the boat leaped up into daylight. The electric lights were extinguished, and for the first time in many days our voyagers saw the light of day.

The sun was shining brightly on a fairly smooth sea. There was not a sail in sight.

Of course, as soon as the deck was above the surface, water ceased to come into the boat. Frank at once took measures to repair the leak.

The steel plate was quickly riveted again, and the submarine boat was ready to return again to the depths.

For an hour or two, however, the voyagers remained on the surface for the sake of the sunlight. Then all were ordered into the cabin, and once more Frank sent the Venture to the bottom.

Down she quickly settled, until again the dark valleys and coral forests came into view.

Then Fingan clutched Frank's arm.

"I see a ship!" he said.

"A ship?"

"Yes; look yonder!"

Frank saw plainly now, resting upon a coral reef, a sunken vessel. Her white sails were half set, and she looked just as if she was about to fill away before the wind.

Certainly she bore no appearance of having been riddled by a storm. Frank was startled.

"That ship foundered in a fair sea," he declared; "she must have sprung a leak."

"It looks to a dead certainty like the Corsair," declared Fingan.

"Indeed, you are right."

"Sail nearer and let us take a look at her."

"Certainly."

The Venture now sailed nearer the sunken vessel. The search-light was turned full upon her.

And indeed she did look strongly like the Corsair.

"There should be a name on her bow," said Fingan. "Can we not get around so as to take a look at it?"

"We will try," agreed Frank.

The submarine boat sailed around so that the search-light fell athwart the sunken ship's bow. Letters were seen indistinctly, but at that distance they could not be deciphered.

"It is the Corsair, I believe!" cried Fingan. "I will pay her a visit!"

A good resting place was found on the reef for the Venture. Then Fingan and Frank donned diving suits.

There was no little excitement among the party. If this should prove to be the Corsair they would soon have solved the mystery of her fate.

The two divers entered the vestibule and soon were out on the deck. Then they lowered themselves over the rail and made their way toward the sunken ship.

The intervening space was not easy to cross.

The coral reef was jagged and broken, and it required some labor to make their way over it.

But finally they succeeded, and came up under the stern of the sunken ship.

They crept along under the huge hull until they reached the bow. Here, standing upon a spur of coral, they were able to see plainly the name just under the bowsprit.

Fingan clutched Frank's arm. The letters were plain:

"CORSAIR—LIVERPOOL."

CHAPTER IX.

A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT.

For a few moments the two divers were unable to act. That they had at last found the missing ship was a strange reflection. A great many doubts were thus settled; a great many theories exploded.

The Corsair, after all, had foundered of her own accord in mid ocean.

She had gone down into the depths of the sea, but not into the embrace of the Black Whirlpool, as had been believed.

But the fate of her crew—what of them?

Had they also gone down with her, or had they made their escape in some way?

This could only be told after a search of her decks and cabins. Frank was the first to act.

He motioned to Fingan to follow him. Then he proceeded to climb up by means of the anchor cable.

In a few moments both men stood on the deck. The scene spread before them was a grewsome one.

All doubts as to the fate of the crew were settled. There were more than a score of dead bodies scattered about the deck.

They lay in various positions, which could suggest no other manner of death than drowning.

Surely the ship must have gone down very suddenly to have allowed of the launching of no boat.

But what made the spectacle doubly hideous was the fact that none of the dead men had a vestige of flesh left upon the exposed parts of their bodies.

This was due of course to the appetite of denizens of the deep. It, however, was an unfortunate circumstance, for it made identification extremely difficult.

Fingan recovered his nerve sufficiently to examine the bodies for the purpose of locating Dingley.

Could he find the messenger's body he believed that he would be sure of the necessary evidence to clear Bliss of the charge against him.

So he carefully examined one after another of the bodies.

The dress of each greatly aided him. He knew that he need not look for Dingley with a seaman's garb on. So he passed over quickly all that were thus attired.

But presently he came to a tall man, dressed in civilian style. Hastily he examined his person for the tin box.

But it was not on him; next him, however, lay a shorter man dressed much the same. Neither did he have the desired tin box on his person.

But there was in an inner pocket a packet of papers in an oil skin case. These the detective held up in the glare of the electric light. Upon the case was the name in printed gilt letters:

"Arthur Dingley,

"London, England."

"Found!" gasped the detective; "these must be the papers! This is the body of Dingley beyond a doubt! He probably changed them from the tin case to this oiled packet!"

Yet, to make sure, the detective continued his search.

But these two bodies were the only ones bearing the appearance of possible passengers. That the short man was Arthur Dingley, there was no manner of doubt.

Fingan did not attempt to examine the papers here. He rose and made a signal to Frank.

The latter placed his helmet close to the detective's, and shouted:

"Have you found them?"

"I believe so!"

"What will you do now?"

"Let us go back to the Venture and examine them."

"All right!"

So presently they were lowering themselves over the ship's rail. In a very short time they were back in the cabin of the submarine boat.

Removing their diving suits, the detective threw the oiled packet upon the cabin table.

"I believe they are there," he said. "James Menton Bliss will be saved from the gallows!"

"I thought you expected to find the papers in a tin box?" said Frank.

"That was what Dingley said in his letter. But probably he changed the form of the receptacle."

"That looks reasonable. I am curious to know if these are indeed the right papers!"

"We'll very quickly settle that," said the detective, producing a pocket knife.

He quickly cut the tape which bound the packet and drew aside the oil-skin cover. Several legal looking documents fell out.

A glance at them caused Fingan to give a sharp, gasping cry:

"My soul! these are only personal deeds of real estate. They are of value only to the owner. There is no writ of evidence or confession here."

The detective unfolded one deed after the other. It was true. They were simply private papers of Arthur Dingley.

Nothing more.

There were no other papers of a legal sort. The papers of evidence to establish the innocence of Bliss were surely lacking.

It was a stunning discovery.

For a moment the detective stood like one dazed. Then he picked up his diving helmet.

"What are you going to do?" asked Frank.

"I am going back to the Corsair."

"What for?"

"To find that tin box with the important papers."

"But—"

"Well?"

"If that was Arthur Dingley's body they were not on it."

The detective drew a deep breath.

"That is so!" he said; "but there is a chance that Dingley may have left the papers in his stateroom or elsewhere on board. Again, that may not have been Dingley's body!"

"This packet of papers would seem to be prima facie evidence."

"That may be. But I must be sure. I must go back and make a faithful search."

"Ah, you are right enough in that," agreed Frank. "I will go with you!"

"Do not, if you do not wish to."

"But I am interested."

"Very well!"

In a few moments they were again on the deck of the Corsair. This time the detective examined the clothes of every corpse on the deck.

But the tin box could not be found. Then down into the cabin he went.

It was not difficult to find Arthur Dingley's stateroom. The purser's book gave the number and the steamer trunk bore his name.

The detective ransacked the trunk and the stateroom. Then he went through the cabin and even the ship as best he could.

"A human life depends," he declared. "I must leave no stone unturned."

And a faithful search it was which he made. But it was one absolutely unrewarded.

The tin box nor the papers could not be found. It was a crushing blow.

For hours the detective pursued his quest. He would not abandon it. He was absolutely determined to find the object of his quest.

But he failed.

Nothing rewarded his efforts. At length when in a state of sheer exhaustion, Frank dragged him back to the Venture.

Once in the cabin of the submarine boat, the young inventor attempted to reason with him.

"It's of no use, Fingan," he said. "It is the decree of fate. We have found the Corsair and the body of Dingley. But the papers were not to be found where he said they were!"

"But poor Bliss!" groaned the detective, "they will hang him, and heavens! He is an innocent man!"

"That is indeed hard!" agreed Frank; "but how can we help it?"

"We must find those papers!"

"We have tried!"

"But we must not fail. Certainly Dingley had them!"

To gratify the detective's whim Frank allowed him the next day to go back and renew his quest.

After another half day spent thus Fingan was satisfied.

"Enough," he said. "I am well assured that either Dingley lied about those papers or else he lost them."

"They are certainly not to be found!" agreed Frank. "Now it is for you to say what had better be done."

"We can only go back home with our sad tale," said the detective, despondently. "Poor Bliss! It is awful to think of the fate he must meet!"

"Perhaps he can be saved yet," said Frank. "When the judges see the letter of Dingley and learn of the Corsair's fate, maybe they will at least commute his sentence to imprisonment."

"Ah! but that is equivalent to death. And now that Dingley is dead—"

"But cannot the lost evidence be duplicated?"

"Ah, no, for the self-confessed murderer is dead and buried in India. His confession is lost, and the witnesses, Hindoos all, are perhaps beyond all possible chance of recall."

"Well, it does look like a hopeless case!" agreed Frank. "And yet you know there is always hope."

"You speak kind words of good cheer. But that does not altogether furnish a remedy. However, let us go home at once."

"It shall be as you say!" said Frank.

A few moments later a last look was taken at the Corsair. Then the submarine boat started for the surface.

Up—it went for what seemed a great space. Then it emerged above the sea level, and the blue, star-lit canopy of heaven was above with the moon riding high.

The sea was moderate, so the submarine boat took an easy course to the northward.

The voyagers were much fatigued and glad to avail themselves of the opportunity to sleep.

Until a late hour the next day they slept.

Then the first on deck was the detective, Fingan. And he was met there by Barney, who pointed to the horizon and cried:

"Shure, sor, there is a bit av land in soight over there!"

The detective gave a start.

"An island!" he said. "It lies right in our course. Perhaps it may hold a Crusoe. We shall pass near it. Let us see."

CHAPTER X.

THE CASTAWAY.

At this moment Frank Reade, Jr., also appeared on deck. He became interested in the island as well.

"If there were any survivors of the Corsair's wreck," suggested Fingan, "why would not this island be a likely point for them to reach? It is right in the northern current, and if they were upon a raft or adrift in a boat, they would be likely to make it."

"That is logical," agreed Frank; "but I am skeptical in regard to there being any survivors."

"That may be; yet if it is not too far out of our course, why not keep an eye on it?"

"We certainly will!"

The Venture drew rapidly near the isle, leaving it to leeward. All the while Fingan studied it with a glass.

Its shores appeared rough and precipitous. In the interior a mountain rose high above the horizon.

That this was a volcano, whether extinct or not, was possible. Almost all islands in this part of the ocean were of volcanic origin.

Fingan studied the precipitous shores carefully. The Venture was not more than a mile from them.

But not a sign of living being could be seen.

If there were castaways on the isle they had not planted any visible signal. Yet Fingan was much excited.

"I don't know why it is," he said, "but I have a strange feeling about that island."

"If you wish we will lay to and send a boat off to explore it," said Frank.

The detective hesitated.

"I suppose my theory is groundless," he said, "it would doubtless be a waste of time. Never mind it!"

So the Venture stood off again to sea.

Fingan had turned away from the rail and apparently lost interest in the isle. Frank had gone into the cabin and Barney was cleaning the search-light.

But Pomp, at this moment, came up out of the galley and cast a glance toward the isle. As he did so he gave a sharp cry.

"Hi-hi!" he shouted; "look ober dere. Wha' yo' call dat? Looks laik a big fish!"

Like a flash Fingan turned. At the same moment Frank came out of the cabin.

All had heard the darky's speech, and all eyes were turned in the direction indicated by him. This was toward the island.

And all beheld a surprising spectacle. High up on the cliff there was seen a sheet of flame.

It shot high up into the air and burned steadily and brightly. It was a signal fire.

Only human hands could have built it. Only one purpose could have animated the builder.

This was to attract the attention of the passing vessel. At a motion from Frank, Barney sprang into the pilot house.

The submarine boat came about instantly. She was at once headed for the island.

As she drew nearer, it became all the more certain that the fire was a beacon set by some castaway.

Fingan could hardly contain himself, so excited was he.

"Something told me from the first," he cried, "that there was somebody on that island. I will wager even that it is one or more of the Corsair's crew!"

"We shall soon know," said Frank, logically.

Nearer the Venture drew to the rocky isle.

And now, plainly enough, a miserable-looking, half-clad human being, was seen frantically rushing along the verge of the cliffs and beckoning to them.

It was a castaway.

There was no doubt of this. The Venture ran into a little bay in the island coast, and there came to anchor not fifty yards from the shore.

A boat was put out, and Frank and Fingan, with Barney, started for the shore.

Now the castaway's features could be seen quite plainly. He was rushing up and down the sands in a sort of a frenzy.

As the boat dashed upon the beach and the voyagers sprang out, he crouched down upon the sands and glared at them in a strange, vacant way.

A glance told our voyagers the sad truth.

"My soul!" exclaimed Fingan; "he is mad!"

This was a certain fact. His experiences on the desert isle had affected his reason. Whether this flight of intellect was recent or not could only be guessed.

Certainly he had been possessed of sufficient wit to light the beacon and attract a rescue. Perhaps the very realization of his hopes of rescue had been the means of turning his brain.

In his apparently weakened physical state this was not altogether to be wondered at. His whole appearance betrayed fearful suffering.

Aghast, our voyagers gazed at him.

He was a seaman of the ordinary type, about forty years of age and possessed of a heavy cast of features. That he was an Englishman seemed certain.

"Mad!" ejaculated Frank. "Yes, as mad as a March hare. This is pitiable. Poor fellow! His sufferings have done this."

Fingan approached and ventured to address him.

"My good man," he said, "where is your ship? How came you here?"

The maniac for a moment chattered like a gibbering monkey. Then he seemed to become docile, and arising, approached with folded arms.

"The ocean is wide," he said, meaninglessly. "Ah, it has many secrets. It will wrap us all in its embrace some day!"

The voyagers saw by his speech that, though he was a sea-faring man, he was gifted with more than ordinary mental attainments. That is, he had been an educated man.

"Don't fear for me," he said, as none of the others spoke. "I'm with Davy Jones, and he's a snug captain to sail with. Yes, I've signed papers with him. It'll be a long cruise."

"What shall we do, Frank?" whispered Fingan. "We ought not to leave the poor fellow here to die!"

"We will not," said the young inventor. "It is by no means impossible that his aberration is but temporary, and that with nourishment and strength he will soon be himself again."

"So I think; why not take him aboard the vessel?"

"We will!"

Frank adopted a conciliatory manner, and to his joy the maniac seemed as docile as a lamb. Without question he entered the boat and was rowed out to the Venture.

Frank placed him in one of the state-rooms and induced him to eat and drink. In the drink he placed a slight opiate.

And soon the unfortunate man was fast asleep. The rescuers began to have strong hopes.

"Now," said Fingan, as they left their charge, "I have a desire."

"What is it?"

"I want to explore the island. I don't know as it would amount to anything, but I would like to know if any clew to this man's identity can be found there."

"It is a good idea!" declared Frank, "and it shall be done!"

The Venture with the sleeping castaway was left in charge of Barney and Pomp.

Frank and Fingan pulled ashore and began their quest. They quite thoroughly explored the desert isle.

It was nightfall ere they returned. Not a clew of any kind had been found.

A cave in the cliff was discovered where the castaway had slept. There were heaps of shells and bits of fruit to show what his food had consisted of.

Also a seaman's jacket was found and a bunch of waterproof matches. It was with these, doubtless, he had lit the beacon.

The only clew to the sailor's identity was the name on the collar of his pea-jacket.

"Ernest Strange."

This was all.

From what part of the world he came, or what was the name of his ship, could only be learned from his own lips.

And he was hardly in a state of mind to give an accurate answer to this as yet. The two explorers returned to the Venture.

As there was little need of dallying longer in this part of the world, Frank again headed the submarine boat to the northward.

That night Barney watched beside the sleeping castaway.

He did not wake until the next morning. Then just after daylight he stirred, opened his eyes, and yawned. He stared at Barney curiously, and asked in a rational way:

"Heave ho! What's the watch, mate?"

"Everything's snug, sor!" replied the Celt, astutely; "they've not piped for us yet!"

"I'm right glad of that," replied the sailor, languidly; "for I own I was powerful foggy in the maintop. You're sure the bo'suns not whistled?"

"Quite sure, me frind," replied Barney.

The sailor now opened his eyes and stared at the Celt.

"Hang me high!" he gasped. "When did you come aboard? I didn't know we'd an Irishman in the crew!"

"Shure, sor, I've bin aboard all the toime since lavin' Liverpool!"

"Avast there, mate! I know better than that. Eh—how—what have we here?"

The seaman stared about the luxurious little stateroom. Then he passed a hand across his brow and gasped:

"This is not the fo'castle. It's an officer's cabin. Where the deuce am I? Is it a dream? Heigho, my lad, what ship is this?"

"This is the submarine boat Venture, sor!" replied Barney.

The sailor gave a great cry.

"Right, mate!" he shouted. "I had forgotten. The old Corsair went down, ay, she's at the bottom of the sea. I remember now, drifting on that awful spar, the desert island, and——"

He came to a pause.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SAILOR'S STORY.

It was at this moment that the detective, Fingan, stood in the stateroom door.

He had heard the last words of the castaway, and it was with a mighty effort that he controlled himself.

He saw all in an instant.

The seaman's reason had returned. He was himself again.

Standing there in the center of the stateroom, Ernest Strange had covered his eyes with his hand and was trying to think.

"The island!" he muttered. "And what then—what then? Oh, I cannot remember more. It is all a blank!"

"Then you have not forgotten the Corsair?" asked Fingan gently.

The seaman started and stared at the detective.

"You have the weather on me, captain," he said respectfully. "I don't remember you. Where am I?"

"Sit down here," said Fingan in his most persuasive way. "Let us see if we can't have an understanding. You shipped aboard the Corsair?"

"I did, captain."

"At Liverpool?"

"Aye, sir."

"Now the Corsair encountered a gale off the Tropic of Capricorn——"

"Asking your pardon, sir—she did not."

The detective was astonished.

"What!" he exclaimed; "she did not encounter a gale?"

"No, sir."

"Nor did not founder in the same?"

"She did not, sir; I make free to say that."

"But the Corsair is at the bottom of the sea."

"As fit as a fiddle, sir, and a couple of cannon ball breaches under her water line, sir. May the fiends fly away with them as did it!"

Had Fingan seen a ghost at that moment he could not have received a greater shock.

He was unable for a moment to speak.

Then he gasped:

"A couple of cannon balls under her water line?"

"Aye, sir; that is what sent the Corsair to the bottom."

"Perhaps you can make that clearer to me?"

"I reckon, sir. You see we had just crossed the Tropic and were making good headway with free winds."

"One morning a black sail showed over our quarter. It kept creeping up and gave us chase. Our skipper began to get anxious."

"It's Malays to a dead certainty," he said, "and they'll wear us out in this breeze. We must make a long run and trust to a fog or a dark night to slip 'em."

"That was all well and good, but the fog or the dark night didn't come. The cursed villains crept nearer, and on the second day opened fire."

"They brought our mizzen down, and knocked a hole in our poop deck. Then our captain called us aft, and said:

"Boys, we'll lay to and give 'em a fight at close quarters. It's our only hope. If we can't lick 'em that way we're done for anyway. Get out all the weapons you can, and fight like the devil.' That we did."

"The Malay devils came over our quarter and covered our decks with blood. They cut us down like sheep. At last, seeing I was the only man left, I made over the cat-heads and trusted to a swim for life. Luckily they didn't see me."

"I saw 'em loot the ship and then fire a couple of shots through her. She went down grandly and they sailed away to the north. I had given myself up for lost."

"But sharks are scarce below the Tropic, and just then a floating timber came my way. I clung to it for three days without food or drink."

"Then in the night I drifted ashore. It was a rocky island and—I can remember no more."

"I can tell you the rest," said Fingan, calmly, "but before I do let me ask you a question."

"Aye, skipper!"

"Was there not on board the Corsair a man by the name of Arthur Dingley?"

"Aye!" replied Strange, eagerly, "he was going back to England with a lot of valuable papers to clear a man convicted of murder."

"Just so!" cried the detective, excitedly. "Now those papers, do you know where he carried them?"

"Aye, sir, as he often told us, next his body in a tin box. He asked us all in case of accident to him to look after those papers."

The detective sprang up excitedly.

"Well," he said, "do you think the pirates would have taken those papers from his body?"

"It may be so," replied the sailor, "but if not, sir, I make free to say they must be at the bottom of the ocean now."

"On Dingley's body?"

"I should say so, sir!"

"Enough!" said Fingan. "Now let me tell you how you came aboard our vessel."

"I should like to know that, skipper."

Strange listened earnestly to the detective's narrative of how he was rescued from the isle. Then he described the peculiarities of the Venture.

Strange could hardly believe his senses. He had never before heard of a submarine boat.

"So I was crazy!" he exclaimed. "Well, it must have been my sickness. But I'm all right now, mate."

"So you are," cried Fingan, "but come in and have some breakfast and meet Mr. Reade. Then we'll show you over the submarine boat."

Strange bowed in a constrained way.

"Saving your presence, sir," he said, "I am only a poor seaman."

"Oh, that is all right," declared the detective. "We don't stand on terms of equality here. One man is as good as another if he is respectable."

With this assurance, Strange followed the detective into the main cabin where Pomp had a smoking repast ready.

To this all sat down and soon were upon the best of terms. The sailor rapidly recovered his spirits and his mental equilibrium.

He recounted over again the story of the loss of the Corsair and the fight with the pirates.

"In truth, sir," he said to Fingan, "there is little doubt but that the black rascals took the tin box from the dead body of the passenger."

"But of what value could it be to them?" asked the detective.

The sailor shook his head.

"I make free to say that it was none," he declared; "but they might fancy some future value attached, or again they may have destroyed the papers or carried them away."

"Do you think you would know this Malay dhow if you were to see it again?" asked Fingan.

The sailor shook his head.

"Ah, it is not often they come into the Indian Ocean," he replied. "They are all of the same style. It would be hard to tell, as she had no name or distinguishing mark."

After the meal was over, Strange went forward with Barney and Pomp.

While he was regaling them with salty tales of the sea, Frank and Fingan were aft holding an animated discussion.

"Of course, I wish to follow up any reasonable clew," Frank was saying, "but I do not believe we would gain anything by returning to the Corsair!"

"Possibly not," said Fingan, "and yet—I am anxious to leave no loophole open."

"I can't blame you."

"A human life is at stake."

"We would turn back now if I thought there was a ghost of a chance."

"Ah, but this sailor, he was more familiar with the ship. Perhaps he might find it——"

"I fail to see how his search could be greater than ours. Again, he admits that Dingley carried the tin box always about his person!"

"Yes!"

"Very well. It is, of course, a pretty sure conclusion that the Malays confiscated that, and have either destroyed or carried it away!"

"It is all a terrible thing," said the detective, with keen disappointment, "if it were only possible to run down the pirate dhow, force or bribe the wretches to yield up the papers."

"It would be a very hopeless quest," said Frank; "the best you can do is to return to London. Lay the facts in the case before the court. You can prove that Dingley was possessed of papers to prove Bliss' innocence. That the ship aboard which he was, was attacked and sunk by pirates. You have made every effort to find the papers."

The proof that they existed should at the very least compel the judges to commute the death sentence to a term of imprisonment."

"Ah!" groaned Fingan. "You do not know our English courts. They are inexorable in cases of this kind."

"Then the blood of the prisoner will be on their heads!"

"Which will not help Bliss!"

"Very true!"

Frank took a turn up and down the deck. Finally he came to a halt, and said:

"Well, Fingan, I will yield to you. We will make what quest we can for the dhow!"

The detective gave a cry of joy.

"You will get your reward," he said; "it is more than philanthropy, it is a Christian act, a deed which will be recorded to your credit in another and a better life."

"But where shall we pursue our quest?" asked Frank.

"I think that such a vessel, after a successful cruise, would return to the haunts of the Malays in their own peninsula. What if we look for them there?"

"Very well," agreed the young inventor. "We will sail at once for Malaysia in the Pacific. It will be a long cruise. We may not see London for many months—perhaps a year."

"Very well. I am sure that Moreton will get the case put over. They cannot hang Bliss under that time. At least, we can try."

It was startling news to Barney and Pomp that the Venture was to enter the Pacific upon what seemed an almost hopeless quest.

But they did not demur.

Frank, however, addressed Strange.

"We will put you aboard any passing vessel you may prefer," he said, "or you may become one of the crew of this boat."

Strange hitched up his trousers awkwardly, and said:

"Well, skipper, if you're short a hand, I may say that I'll be glad to sign papers with you, for I like ye. An' there's my hand on it!"

So Strange turned in with Barney and Pomp, with whom he had already become fast friends.

The submarine boat was thus booked for the Pacific.

Her course was changed and she lay a trifle northward to cross the Tropic into smoother seas.

To tell the truth Fingan did not feel wholly at ease in the matter.

He was not sure that this was after all the best move. He had a strange feeling that in leaving the Indian Ocean he was leaving the game behind him.

But the die was cast. He would not now change his plans, and so the Venture's course was shifted so that she stood away again to the eastward and toward the Pacific.

CHAPTER XII.

BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

FOR two days the Venture held her eastward course. She had passed the line of the Black Whirlpool and was reaching over toward the northern tip of Australia.

Frank believed that a month of rapid sailing would place him in the Pacific and into the Malacca Passage.

Then the quest for the pirate dhow might be truthfully said to have been begun.

It would be a dangerous game at best. The submarine boat carried no guns, while many of the pirate ships were floating arsenals.

Unless the Venture's crew could treat with the Malays and secure the tin box and papers by means of a reward, there would be a scant show to get them by force.

Of course the Venture could sink any vessel afloat by placing a dynamite torpedo under her in any sea. But many vessels might be destroyed and many hundreds of lives taken thus for naught.

And to actual warfare Frank had a wholesome repugnance. He positively would not indulge in it, save in self-defense or to right a great wrong.

Of course if he could single out the dhow which carried the stolen papers, and could be sure that they were aboard and that they could be recovered in no other way, he would not hesitate a moment to sink the dhow.

But it was not destined that affairs should come to this desperate pass.

Nor was it meant that the Venture's keel should ever cut the waters of the South Pacific.

It came about in a startling manner.

One day Strange was telling some pretty strong sea tales when Barney ventured to affirm:

"Bejabers, we have pirate treasure aboard this very boat, sor."

Strange looked at the Celt as if to take the matter as a joke. But Barney was in earnest.

"It's thue, I tell yez."

"Dat am right, sah!" affirmed Pomp. "I see dem when dey brought it ab'o'd. De l'ishman heah an' Mistah Fingan."

"Heave away there, lads," said the sailor, incredulously. "I like a yarn, but it must have a little varnish on it."

"Yez don't belave it, eh?" asked Barney.

"I believe me eyes, mate!"

"Whurroo! Yez shall see it thin. Shure, there's Mither Fingan. The top av the mornin' to yez, sor!"

"Well, Barney," said the detective, as he came up, "what favor can I do you, sir?"

"Shure, yez kin bear me out in me statement, sor!"

"Ah, what is that?"

Barney glanced at Strange.

"This gentleman don't belave that ye and meself has pirate treasure aboard this boat, sor!"

"Easy, mates," put in the sailor. "I never misdoubts a gentleman's word. If his honor says so, so it is, an' I'll fight the fo'castle, it's so!"

"Thin listen, will yez?" cried Barney, triumphantly.

Fingan nodded pleasantly.

"Barney spoke the truth," he said. "We do own a chest of pirate treasure, and it is at this moment aboard this ship."

"So I say, sir, myself," said Strange, most civilly, "and the man who says not is a Turkish liar!"

"Thin we air unanymus on that point," declared Barney, with much satisfaction.

But Fingan went further.

"To settle all doubts, Barney," he said, "and also for the sake of a little diversion, let's bring out the chest and divide up the treasure."

Barney sprang to his feet.

"I'm wid yez, sor," he cried.

Of course the others were interested. They even went into the cabin and assisted in bringing out the heavy chest.

It was placed just before the turret in a favorable spot, and then Fingan lifted the cover.

There it was filled nearly to the brim with a profusion of coins. They were of all metals and all nations.

But copper seemed to be the predominating metal, and Strange said:

"If they were all of gold it would be a mighty fine argosy ye'd be carrying home, mates!"

"You are right," agreed Fingan, "but there is yet a good deal of gold and silver. Here are some English sovereigns, and some French francs. But these are the finest—Uncle Sam's double eagles, fresh from the mint."

"Which means that one of Uncle Sam's vessels fell into the grip of these pirates," said Strange.

Then he ceased speaking; his gaze caught that of the detective. Fingan was looking at him in a startled manner.

"Strange," said the detective, in a constrained voice, "it may be only a coincidence, but a sudden thought struck me. Malay vessels seldom come into the Indian Ocean, do they?"

"Very seldom, sir."

"Now, this vessel which sunk the Corsair was a dhow, was she not?"

"Aye, sir?"

Fingan was like a rigid statue.

"Answer me," he said. "What course did you last see her making after she left the Corsair?"

"South by east, sir."

The detective turned and confronted Frank Reade, Jr., who had just come out of the turret. For a moment the detective gasped for breath. Then he exploded:

"Frank, turn about as quick as you can! We are going right away from our game."

To say that the young inventor was astounded would be a mild statement.

"W-what?" he exclaimed. "What's up now, Fingan?"

"We are going away from our game! I have the best of reasons for believing that the sunken dhow from which we got this treasure was the very vessel which sunk the Corsair."

Frank was astounded.

"What reason have you for that assumption?" he asked.

"Several simple deductions. In the first place dhows seldom come into the Indian Ocean from Malaysia. Again the dhow which sunk the Corsair made a course directly for the Black Whirlpool. That it was the same vessel from which we obtained the treasure there can be little doubt. Retribution of a fearful sort quickly overtook the wretches as it ought. There is one more chance for us. We must go back to the whirlpool. If we find the tin box aboard that sunken dhow all will be well. If we do not, it is gone forever, and James Menton Bliss is lost."

"I am glad to do as you direct," said Frank; "if you say the word, we will about ship and go back to the Black Whirlpool."

"I do say so!"

"Very good!"

"We will not go to Malaysia, which I can now see would be an errand of folly. Back to the Whirlpool, and fail or win, there I am done!"

"That is common sense," declared Frank, "perhaps we may find the box after all."

"I shall hope so!"

Frank turned to the pilot house, but at this exciting moment a sharp cry came from the lips of Strange, the sailor.

"Blow me hard!" he cried, dashing his hand down into a heap of the coins. "I thought I had my eye on it. There's a shilling, English, I'll swear came from the Corsair, for it was once my property."

The startled gaze of all was turned upon Strange. He held the silver piece up triumphantly.

"I know it well!" he cried. "See that niche in the milling? I cut that in an idle moment. I gave this shilling to the steward two days before the ship went down for a bottle of brandy."

This astounding statement for a moment overwhelmed all. The detective's eyes glowed.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, "there is the positive evidence. We shall succeed. I know we shall."

"Perhaps there is other evidence in this chest, mates," cried Strange.

And down he went upon his knees and began overhauling the heap of coins again. He lifted them out in handfuls and began inspecting them.

And deep down among them Fingan's eyes suddenly caught the gleam of another metal. Instinctively he reached down and put his hands upon it.

And then—he never forgot that moment in his life. Up from the heap of coins he drew a long, tin box.

There was blood upon it—ugly crimson stains. That they came from the veins of Arthur Dingley there was no doubt.

One moment there was a spellbound silence. The detective pressed the spring which opened the box cover.

An oil silk packet lay inside.
He hastily undid it and read:

"Mortuary confession of the murder of the Earl of Manton——"

The detective read no further. He swung the packet aloft and shouted:

"Cheers! Cheers! We have found the evidence! Bliss is saved!"

And the cheers were given with a will. That was a happy hour on board the Venture.

It is needless to say that the course of the submarine boat was changed. Three days later she passed the line of the Black Whirlpool.

In due course she safely made Cape Town. Here a brief stop was made for necessary repairs.

But the Venture was soon again on her way along the west coast of the African continent.

Once more she crossed the Gulf of Guinea and sighted Cape Verde. Then in due time she passed outside the Bay of Biscay and finally into the Irish Sea.

When the submarine boat once more anchored in the Mersey it was a happy moment for all.

The hour was early, but Fingan instantly went ashore. He purchased a London paper, and on the first page read:

"The murderer of the Earl of Manton, James Menton Bliss, will be hanged at noon to-day. A reprieve was hoped for until last night, but it is understood that this has been refused. The counsel for the condemned have depended upon real or imaginary evidence arriving from India. This was supposed to have been aboard the missing ship Corsair. As no evidence has been forthcoming, the stern decree of the law must be enacted."

Fingan was deadly pale.

"Only to think," he muttered, "another day and I would have been to late!"

He instantly rushed into a telegraph office and sent messages right and left.

A half hour later he was on a fast express train speeding for London.

That evening the papers were full of the exploits of the submarine voyagers and the marvelous recovery of the lost evidence.

Owners and underwriters of the Corsair were glad to know her fate.

They held a grand reception, in which Frank Reade, Jr., was the honored guest.

Fingan received a large reward for his work. This, with his share of the pirate treasure, repaid him well.

Strange, the sailor, quickly shipped again aboard another of Mr. Clare's vessels.

But it is safe to say that, in all his future career on the high seas, he will scarce meet with stranger incidents than those which we have just chronicled.

Frank Reade, Jr., had had enough submarine voyaging for a while.

So one morning he headed the Venture across the Atlantic. One day he entered a river which led down to the sea, and paused at the quays of a smart little city called Readestown.

Here was his home and the wonderful shops where he perfected all his inventions. The Venture was taken out of the water and broken up, for she was too badly used up to stand another cruise.

Barney and Pomp were glad to get back home again, where for the present, with the reader's kind permission, we will take leave of them.

[THE END.]

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